

like the jaws of an alligator
as he worked his own jaws up and down
making weird grunts.
He couldn't stop
going up to some machinist
with a long cylindrical part
and blowing through the part as if he were
doing a trumpet call,
then loudly announcing the machinist's name
as if he were announcing a King.
He just couldn't stop putting
a big C-clamp around his head
and closing its steel pads against his temples
and walking up to machinists telling them
how he had this pressing pain in his head
and asking them for aspirins.

Being a machinist at his machine
just wasn't good enough for him.

DESTINY

The managers are afraid
some auditor with a clipboard
will come walking through the building
and notice the 60-year-old
machines
and, thinking them useless broken-down antiques,
order them taken out and melted down
into scrap metal.
So the managers
never spend any money
buying new machine parts to replace the old ones
that inevitably
wear
and loosen
and lose accuracy,
rendering the machines closer and closer to being
useless broken-down antiques.

COMPANY MAN

He arrives back skidding
to a stop on the stripped-down little-kid-style
Goodstone Aircraft Company bicycle he uses
to ride all over the plant in and out of building after
building for hours,
stepping up to his machine and punching
the SPINDLE START button and standing there
turning handles and making chips fly out of a block of
metal as he spends the last 2 minutes

before the mid-morning break
cutting metal feverishly,
just as
immediately after the 10-minute break he is up
jumping to his machine to grab a handle and push
the SPINDLE START button and cut
metal feverishly for another 2 minutes
before hopping back on his bike and riding out of the
building
again for another hour or two.

He really takes seriously
the supervisor's repeated stressing at meetings about the
importance of working during those 2 minutes right before
and after breaks.

That's when Goodstone's idle-time auditors
walk around checking for machinists wasting time.

THE MANTRA

At 7:00 a.m.
unlocking his toolbox and throwing open its lid he'll
begin yelling, "Fuck. Fuck. Fuck." and then
"Fuck it. Fuck it. Fuck it." and then
looking over at me with wild-eyed
despair say,
"Fuck it Fred! Fuck it Fred! Fuck it Fred!"
waiting for me to look and then
slamming his airgun down onto his sheet-metal workbench top
so that it SLAPS and yelling,
"Fuck this place! Fuck this place!"
waiting for me to nod and then taking out his hammer
and pounding out an ear and nerve shattering drum roll
against a particularly reverberative steel section of his
machine,
turning to stare at me with legs spread, shouting out as
loud as he can, "Fuck 'em! FUCK 'EM ALL, FRED! FUCK 'EM
ALL IN THE ASS!!"

It's just a little early morning
Goodstone Aircraft Company ritual he goes through
that makes him feel better.

VALUABLES

Goodstone Aircraft Company never buys
enough new parts or tooling
to go around
in the machine shop.
So on our 3 shifts,
we cram our toolboxes full